

# The Missouri Overweight and Obesity **Observer**

Published by the Section for Nutritional Health and Services

A compilation of the latest news relating to overweight and obesity from around the state, nation and world.

JULY 2003

**NOTE:** Some web pages may have expired since news pages are updated frequently.

## Expert says worldwide obesity epidemic to get worse

Obesity has ballooned into a worldwide epidemic affecting approximately 250 million adults and, according to a leading nutritionist, the worst is yet to come. Overweight adolescents are poised to cause an even bigger global health problem as they mature into obese adults, he says.

The younger generation, according to Dr. Mikael Fogelholm, chairman of the 12th European Congress on Obesity currently meeting in Helsinki, "will be even more obese than we are." He explained that a steady diet of high-fat fast foods and hours in front of the television have taken its toll on today's children.

For the full story, go to <http://stacks.msnbc.com/news/919417.asp#BODY>

## Overweight teens now going for stomach stapling surgery

With the percentage of overweight children at an all time high, teenagers are turning to the once adult-only surgical procedure of stomach stapling as a way to lose weight, according to a recent CNN report. The procedure closes off parts of the stomach and, sometimes, intestines restricting the amount of food a person can eat by creating a fuller feeling with a much less food.

The surgery was performed on an estimated 40,000 U.S. patients in 2001, according to the National Institutes of Health. Some physicians question whether it is ethical to perform such a permanent procedure on a young person's body, and whether a teenager is mature enough to commit to such a big decision. Candidates for the surgery are typically severely obese, have a life-threatening health problem such as diabetes, and have obesity-related physical problems that

result in difficulties walking or working.

For the full story, go to <http://www.cnn.com/2003/HEALTH/diet.fitness/06/20/teen.obesity.surgery/index.html>

## Bill protects restaurants from suits for serving fatty foods

A bill that supporters say would put an end to frivolous lawsuits against restaurants for serving fatty foods is currently being debated in the House. A House panel recently heard emotional testimony about a proposed law aimed at protecting restaurants against lawsuits from people who blame fast-food marketing for their obesity. Critics claim people should take responsibility for their own bad eating habits and that passing such a bill would unfairly put the food industry in a special, protected category.

For the full story, go to <http://www.msnbc.com/news/928804.asp?0dm=H18OH>

## Given their choice, kids will select smaller portion sizes

According to a report recently in the Washington Post, a series of studies conducted on preschoolers has revealed that allowing children to determine their own portion sizes may help curb the trend toward overweight children.

The study is being conducted by scientists from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Children's Nutrition Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston to determine better ways to get children started early on healthy eating and avoiding obesity.

The researchers found that when offered a larger servings, children ate 25 percent more. These results, published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, are consistent with previous research.

*Continued on next page.*



**Continued from page one.**

For the full story, go to <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A36882-2003Jun9.html>

## More birth defects seen in babies of overweight mothers

Women anxious to give birth to healthy babies may do well to watch their weight prior to getting pregnant. According to a study from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, researchers have found an increased risk for certain birth defects among women who are obese or overweight when they become pregnant.

They found that obese women (body mass index [BMI] of 30 or more) were more likely to have an infant with spina bifida, omphalocele, heart defects, and multiple anomalies. They also found that overweight women (BMI greater than 25, but less than 30) were more likely to have infants with heart defects and multiple anomalies.

For the full story, go to [http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/factsheets/pediatrics/Pediatrics\\_maternal\\_obesity.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/factsheets/pediatrics/Pediatrics_maternal_obesity.pdf)

## Fast food chains facing increasing pressure

Fast food chains are facing increasing pressure to provide healthier menus, according to a recent report in *Nutrition Week*. In it, Bob Goldin, vice president of the food industry consulting firm Technomic, is quoted as saying that the recent public outcry about obesity scares some leaders in the food industry but “Nobody that I know of out there is reformulating product yet.”

Goldin’s firm is expected to soon recommend “explicit action steps related to new product development, preparation methods, labeling, promotion, and merchandising program.”

Changes in the fast food business are expected but Goldin warned they would take time. He predicts fried food consumption will decline, and there should be more sauce choices with more herbs and mustards.

Although restaurants could immediately be effec-

tive against obesity by reducing portion sizes, the food industry consultant doubted that would happen because consumers would feel they are not getting their money’s worth. Ultimately, the consumers and their spending habits will dictate what the market will do.

## Majority wants to take action against childhood obesity

*USA Today* reported recently on a poll released by the Harvard School of Public Health that revealed more than half of 1000-plus adults polled wanted to prohibit vending machines selling unhealthy food in schools and more than half wanted limits on TV ads promoting unhealthy food and drinks. “On childhood obesity, there’s a lot support for action,” said David Blumenthal, professor of medicine and health policy at Harvard Medical School. “People recognize that children need help to make the right choices.”

For the full story, go to [http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2003-06-11-obese-study\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2003-06-11-obese-study_x.htm)

## Expanding portions making it difficult to ‘choose sensibly’

The Journal of the American Dietetic Association reports that while the U.S. Surgeon General has issued a “Call to Action” regarding the role expanding food portion sizes are playing in increased obesity. While his recommendations to Americans is to “choose sensibly,” there has been no definition of what constitutes appropriate portion sizes.

For the full story, go to <http://www.adajournal.org/scripts/om.dll?serve?action=searchDB&searchDBfor=art&artType=full&id=ajada1030231>

## Swedish supplier offers substitute to reduce trans fat

Recent concerns over trans fatty acids in foods being linked to an increase in blood LDL cholesterol have prompted researchers to seek an alternative. Reports are that Swedish vegetable oil supplier Karlshamns has come up with a cocoa butter substitute with a low trans fatty acid content. On another front, Mark McClellan, commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration said that FDA, in an effort to counter obesity, is seeking to expand food labeling to include such details as trans fats.

For the full story, go to <http://www.foodnavigator.com/news/news.asp?id=7788>